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NF 197
P/M (R)
Middle East

August 6, 1952

TO: S - The Acting Secretary

VIA: G - Mr. Matthews
S/S

DECLASSIFICATION DATE _____.
PER _____ OFFICE _____

FROM: NEA - Mr. Byroade

SUBJECT: Request to Defense to Study Problem of Forward Defense of Middle East

Discussion:

In spite of our long-standing concern with the problem of Middle East defense and the mounting evidence that it is beyond British capabilities to defend any substantial part of the area, there has been no US study of what would be required in terms of force and equipment to effect a forward defense of the Middle East. We believe such a study is essential as a basis for future policy decisions affecting the area. It is clear that an assessment of the feasibility of defending the Middle East will affect petroleum planning, aid programs to the countries of the area and possible actions to compensate for the impairment of the British position and a further reduction of British Middle East commitments which we may have to face.

The attached letter requesting Defense to make such a study was discussed in draft by John Ferguson with Admiral Smith of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Admiral Smith felt that such a request was desirable and indicated that in his judgment the present draft is appropriate.

Recommendation:

That you sign the attached letter to the Secretary of Defense.

Concurrence:

S/P concurs.

NEA:ABDaspit:cms

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Middle East

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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OFFICE OF DIRECTOR

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As you know, our military planning has always considered the British responsible for the defense of the Middle East, just as our political thinking has always allotted to the British primary responsibility for maintaining stability in the Near Eastern area.

However, I understand that current British plans envisage the defense only of a portion of Turkey and of the Mediterranean seacoast from Lebanon south. This of course would permit enemy occupation of the greater part of the Near East and of virtually all of its oil resources.

The Department of State believes that the time has come when we should reassess this situation to determine whether a forward defense of the Near East, designed to protect at least a portion of the oil and give greater protection to our strategic bases, could not be undertaken. It is fully recognized that neither troops nor equipment are presently available to the Western Powers to make such a defense possible, but we need not assume that this will be the case indefinitely. It is our thought that we should begin now to prepare for the time, which might come in 1956 or 1957, when other commitments may permit the furnishing of equipment in significant quantities to the Near East.

It is at least theoretically feasible to count on raising defense forces within the states of the Near East which, with adequate training and equipment, might themselves play the major role in their own defense. Such a development would of course require progress in our political relationship with those states, but would raise fewer problems than would a defense strategy which required the stationing of substantial numbers of Western troops in the area. From the political point of view, it would therefore be desirable to maximize the contribution of the Near East States to the defense of the area. Such a

The Honorable
Robert A. Lovett,
Secretary of Defense.

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Such a contribution would, of course, be possible only if we are able and willing to make available the necessary equipment and training assistance.

As a basis for future decisions, I think we need first of all an objective military estimate of what would be required for a forward defense of the area in terms of divisions, aircraft, naval supporting forces, etc., and an estimate of the cost of the equipment of these forces. Having such an estimate, we would then be in a position to decide whether the enterprise is within our foreseeable means and those of our allies and to what extent the investment would be worthwhile relative to competing defense needs in other parts of the world. Without such an estimate, we cannot decide what policy objectives we should set for ourselves in the Near East.

I suggest, therefore, that you request the Joint Chiefs of Staff to undertake a preliminary study of the essential requirements, from the military point of view, for the forward defense of the Middle East, which for these purposes, I suggest, should be considered to include Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, the Arab States and Israel.

Sincerely yours,

Matthews

NEA:JDJernegan:cms:hh
8/6- 8/15/52

S/P- Mr. Ferguson EUR
Mr. Nitze

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QUESTIONS OF INTEREST TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE WHICH MIGHT BE CONSIDERED IN A STUDY OF THE FORWARD DEFENSE OF THE MIDDLE EAST

M. Middle East

1. What line of defense would be necessary to assure protection of the major oil fields, refineries and pipe lines of the Near East?
2. What forces would be necessary to hold this line assuming that Soviet action in this area would occur only as part of a general war?
3. What portion of these forces would need to be permanently based in the area, and what would be the time schedule for their reinforcement?
4. On the assumption that the maximum feasible effort will be made to train and equip the forces of the area, including those of Turkey and Pakistan, what portion of total force requirements might be raised in the area? In particular, what portion of the forces which would need to be available on D day might be of local origin?
5. What major bases and facilities would be required in the Near Eastern area itself?
6. On the assumption that maximum feasible use will be made of indigenous forces, including those of Turkey and Pakistan, what would be the cost of training and equipping these forces? What would be the cost of building and maintaining the essential bases and other facilities?
7. On the assumption that the remaining forces required would be supplied by the British Commonwealth and the United States, what would be the approximate cost of equipping and maintaining these forces?

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8. If a line

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8. If a line of defense protecting all the major oil installations in the Near East is not feasible, are their feasible alternative lines which would protect smaller areas of substantial importance to the West? What would be required to hold these alternative lines in terms of forces, equipment, etc.?

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